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THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASSORAH.—I.

IN the preamble to his *Analysis of the Political Constitution of the Jews*, Philo asserts:—"And though many years have passed—I cannot tell the exact number, but more than two thousand—the Jews have never altered one word of what was written by Moses."¹ In a similar strain writes Josephus (*Against Apion*, I., 8):—"During so many ages as have elapsed, no one has been so bold as to add anything to the words of Scripture or to take anything therefrom." Again, it is related in the Talmud (*Erubin*, 13 a; *Sota*, 20 a) that R. Ishmael (first century C.E.) exhorted R. Meir, a contemporary scribe, "My son, take care how thou doest thy work, for thy work is a divine one; lest thou drop or add a letter, and thereby becomest a destroyer of the entire world."

If these statements present some exaggeration, they likewise contain much that is true. They reflect, not unfaithfully, the religious reverence which Jews have invariably paid to the word of Scripture, and the jealous care with which, as a rule, they have guarded its text from corruption. This care exhibited itself in two ways: (1) In the multiplication and faithful transcription of copies of the Bible; and (2) in the development of a complete apparatus of critical notes on the external form of the sacred text. It is more particularly to the second of these functions that the term Massorah is applied; although it is not always possible to separate them, inasmuch as they were sometimes performed by one and the same person, and always stood closely related to each other.

Massorah originally signified "tradition" in its widest sense.² Subsequently its significance was restricted to a particular kind of tradition. It came to connote that vast system of literary labours carried on between the second and tenth centuries C.E. by the *Soferim*, or Professional Scribes and their successors, the Massorites proper, in connection with the transcription and critical annotation of the Scriptures. These labours were of a varied character, and their object was to establish a standard and infallible text of the Sacred Writings in conformity with "traditions" which had been

¹ Quoted from his lost works in Eusebius' *Preparation of the Gospel*, Book VIII. ch. 6, *fin*.

² See *Mishna Shekalim*, vi. 1.

“handed down” (מסר)¹ by Scriptural experts from early times. The literary guilds of Scribes and Massorites collated MSS., by the aid of which they corrected faulty readings. They established a system of marginal notes and variants. They purified the text of unseemly expressions. They introduced a graphic system of vocalization, accentuation, and punctuation. They fixed the Biblical books, and their division into sections, paragraphs, and verses, in the order and external form in which we at present possess them. They likewise took careful note of every peculiarity of construction, and of all anomalies relating to the spelling, vocalization, and accentuation of words—anomalies which would be likely to mislead the copyist unless attention was directed to them. They calculated the number of sections, verses, words, and letters contained in the different books of Scripture, and they compiled statistics relating to almost every feature of orthographical and grammatical interest presented by the text. In connection with these varied labours they contrived a system of mnemonic and technical signs which was often ingenious and beautiful, and which, if it has added to the difficulty of deciphering their meaning, possessed the important advantage of brevity.

These annotations have come down to us in various forms. In the Rabbinical Bibles they are disposed partly as marginal glosses, which constitute the *Massorah marginalis* or *textualis*, and partly as separate lists and compendia at the close of the Bibles, forming the *Massorah finalis* or *maxima*. Moreover the *Massorah textualis* is of two kinds. It comprises the *Massorah parva* and *Massorah magna*. The former consists of such curt notes as the marginal readings (קרי וכתוב), statistics of the number of times a particular form is found in Scripture, indications of full and defective spelling (מלא וחסר), and references to abnormally written letters. It is placed in the perpendicular space between the text and the Targum. The latter is of a more copious character, being ranged in the upper and lower margins. The quantity of notes it contains is conditioned by the amount of vacant space on each page. In the MSS. it varied also with (a) the rate at which the scribe was paid, and (b) the fanciful shape he gave to his gloss. The *Massorah* at the end of these Bibles (which is a part of the *Massorah magna*) comprises all the longer rubrics for which space could not be found in the margin of the text, and is alphabetically arranged in the form of a concordance.

¹ Luzzatto, in his *Additamenta* to הפלאה שבערכין (Vienna, 1869, p. 119, b), has rejected the current derivation of *Massorah*. He explains it to mean “signs” (סמנים), i.e., the vowels, accents, and entire technical apparatus introduced by the Massorites.

A profound interest must necessarily attach to questions like the following: Who were the authors of this stupendous system? When and where did they live? Under what circumstances was their work carried on? And how did it stand related to other departments of Scriptural exegesis? Some of the most momentous processes in history (it has often been remarked) have been the most silent. They have been carried on, if not in secret, in so inconspicuous a manner, that they have scarce attracted the attention of those in whose midst they were developing, while events of infinitely less significance have had the full light of history let in upon them. Thus it is with the Massorites. Though we owe to their labours nothing less than the condition in which the text of Scripture has been handed down to us, and through us to the world at large, and for all that Hebrew grammar and lexicography are based on the foundation at which they have toiled, history takes but incidental and confused note of their momentous undertaking. The object of this paper is to attempt to give something like a connected account of the rise and development of these labours. But no one knows better than the writer how incomplete and unsatisfactory this attempt must prove. In the present state of our knowledge, the subject is everywhere beset with hypothesis and conjecture. Upon many vitally interesting points, indeed, even this feeble resource fails us, and we are left to grope our way in utter darkness. The history of the Massorah, even in outline, has yet to be written. At the present moment, it is nothing better than a *rudis et indigesta moles*. Many of the observations that we shall have occasion to make must therefore be viewed as suggestions rather than ascertained facts; as intended to stimulate rather than to satisfy inquiry; as pointing to what we do not know rather than to what we know.

Our sketch may be conveniently divided into three parts: (I.) The rudimentary development of the Massorah in the age of the Talmud; (II.) From the close of the Talmud, in the commencement of the sixth century, to Aaron ben Asher, by whom the Massorah was brought to a completion in the middle of the tenth century; (III.) Later additions to the Massorah, and the subsequent development of Massoretic studies down to our own day.

I.

The labours of the Massorites (understanding the term in a sense wide enough to include their precursors the Soferim) may be said to date from the close of the first or the com-

mencement of the second century of the common era.¹ It would seem that up till that time (the statements of Philo and Josephus notwithstanding) the copyists were in the habit of dealing with the text in a somewhat arbitrary fashion. The readings followed in the LXX. and Samaritan Pentateuch are evidence of this. Even when due allowance is made for theological bias, caprice, and carelessness on the part of the Hellenistic Jews and Samaritans, their divergencies from the *textus receptus* point to the prevalence in early times of widely differing recensions of Scripture, both in Palestine and Alexandria.²

Already during the existence of the Second Temple, serious efforts had been made to introduce uniformity into the text. We have it on the authority of the Talmud (*Chetuboth*, 106 a) that among the officers of the Temple there were paid readers, whose business it was to revise errors in Biblical scrolls. It was deemed a transgression of the Scriptural admonition, "Let not iniquity reside in thy tents" (Job xi. 14), to retain an imperfect copy of any book of the Bible. Consequently all scrolls had to be brought to the Temple for the purpose of being revised by a standard copy deposited in the forecourt (ספר עזרה).³ Again we are told (*Jer. Taanith*, ch. iv. § 2, etc.)

¹ The Massorah is carried back to the same date in a well-known table, which has been found in various forms, Chaldaic and Hebrew, in different works—in the Halle MS. of the *אכלה ואכלה*; in the *Dikduhé Hateamim* of Ben Asher; at the end of a codex of Massecheth Kallah; in a Pentateuch MS. in the Synagogue Sicilia at Rome, etc. (see R. David Oppenheim, *Zur Geschichte der Massorah*, in *Berliner's Magazin*, 1875, p. 31, sq., and Graetz, in *Monatsschrift*, 1887, p. 32, sq.). The following is the text of the passage, in Hebrew, as given in a *Seder Olam* (*Med. Jewish Chronicles*, ed. A. Neubauer, p. 174):—

המסורה הזו שמסר דוסא בן אלעזר בנו של ר' אפס שקבל מר' יהודה הבבלי שקבל מר' שמעון אביו שקבל מר' אדא ור' אדא היה באותו שעה גדול במקרא שקבל מר' המנונא שהוציאה מנהרדעי ור' המנונא ור' אדא קבלו שניהם מבקי שגלה מארץ ישראל לבבל שהגלוהו רופום וכו'.

The Rufus here referred to is no doubt the T. Annius Rufus (called by the Rabbins Turnus or Tyrannus Rufus) who perpetrated atrocities on the Jews of Palestine during the insurrection of Bar Cochba. R. Hamenuna, of Babylon, is specially referred to in *Jer. Taanith*, iv., § 2 as a teacher of Scripture and a contemporary of Jehudah the Prince. Other names in this list are also more or less known. Instead of בָּקִי, the other recensions read מְנַקִּי, מְנַקִּי, or מְנַקִּי הַדַּעַת, מְנַקִּי, מְנַקִּי, on which slender basis Oppenheim (*l. c.*) builds his remarkable theory of an early Massoretic school, identical with the Talmudical *הַדַּעַת הַנִּקִּי*! On the other hand, Graetz (*l. c.*) supposes the entire list to be a Karaite fabrication.

² See Geiger, *Urschrift*, pp. 8-19 and pp. 231-259; W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Lectures III. and IV.; Dillmann, in Herzog's *Encyclopädie*, 2nd edit., Art. *Bibel-text des A. T.*, pp. 386-7.

³ Rashi on Mishna, אֵין כּוֹתְבִין, *Moed Katan*, 18 b.

that three MSS. were once found in the Temple forecourt, which differed as to their readings. In the one they found (Deut. xxxiii. 27) the reading מעון, and in the two others מעונה. They accepted the latter reading and rejected the former. Again, in one of the scrolls they discovered the reading זעמושי (Ex. xxiv. 5) as against נערי in the other two, and accepted the latter. Finally they preferred the reading היה to הוא (Gen. xxxii. 23), because it had two of the MSS. in its favour.

Despite these efforts, the Scriptural codices continued to differ from each other in important details until after the destruction of the Second Temple, when the Rabbinical authority became consolidated, and so was able to exercise an increasingly effective control over the text. The exact language of Holy Writ, and the precise spelling of words, more especially the question whether they were to be spelt with or without the quiescent letters (י, ה, ו, י), now began to receive critical attention.

The central figure of the new movement was the celebrated Akiba, who is said to have attached importance to every particle and grammatical peculiarity (אך, את, and the ו conjunctivum) in Scripture, and who takes a prominent part in discussions which turn on the traditional mode of writing and pronouncing certain words.¹ Its immediate outcome was the word-for-word Greek translation of Scripture executed by Akiba's pupil, the proselyte Aquila—a version which, besides being excessively literal, was based upon readings which came nearer to the Massoretic text than those which the translators of the LXX. and Samaritan Pentateuch had before them.

The *Ethics of the Fathers* (iii. 17) record a famous saying of this illustrious teacher, which throws a side-light on the principles which dominated his exegetical system—מסורת סייג לתורה “The traditional spelling of the Scribes is a fence to the law”; for important exegetical inferences are to be deduced therefrom. The term מסורת is of frequent occurrence in the Talmud in connection with the well-known discussion—יש אם למקרא יש אם למסורת—“whether the Halacha is to be based upon the generally received pronunciation of a word (מקרא); or whether it is to be conformed to the traditional, consonantal spelling of the Scribes

¹ It is significant in this connection that *Pesachim*, 112 a, represents Akiba advising his disciple Shimon ben Jochai to teach his son from a revised text of Scripture (ספר מונה).

(מסורה).¹ Akiba usually maintains the principle that we are to be guided by the current pronunciation (יש אם למקרא); but at times he bases his exegesis on the consonantal spelling, and it is to this, his exceptional procedure,² that his maxim in the *Ethics* must be referred. מְסוּרָה or מְסוּרָה is the only form of the word that occurs in the Talmud. מסורה and the technical significance which this form acquired are both post-Talmudic.

While we can thus trace a definite beginning of the Massoretic labours in the age of Akiba, other ancient references point to the same conclusion. R. José (probably José the Galilean, the colleague of Akiba³) takes note in *Mishna Pesachim* (ix., § 2) of a point above the suspected ה of רחוקה (Numbers ix. 10). The Sifri, which is almost contemporary⁴ with the Mishna, enumerates (*in loco*)⁵ the ten instances of "extraordinary points" which occur in the Pentateuch. This José likewise makes mention (*Berailtha*, *Berachoth*, 4a) of the only case of these points to be found in the Hagiographa.⁶

¹ מְסוּרָה and מְסוּרָה thus correspond to כתיב and קרי. The explanation given above substantially agrees with that of Hupfeld (*Theologische Studien u. Kritiken*, 1830, pp. 556 sq.) and Geiger (*Jüdische Zeitschrift*, i., pp. 290, 291). Other writers incorrectly explain in a reverse sense, rendering מְסוּרָה "consonantal spelling," and מְסוּרָה "traditional pronunciation." See *Sanhedrin*, 4 a; *Kidushin*, 18 b; *Pesachim*, 86 b; and several other Talmudical passages. The expression יש אם is usually explained to mean, "there is a well-grounded reason," and is connected (Saadja, *Commentary on Eikar*—see Geiger, *loc. cit.*) with אומ (Mishna *Negaim*, i., § 5) = עיקר. Rapoport, in his *Erech Millin*, connects מְסוּרָה with the *matres lectionis*, interpreting the formula to mean "We must be guided by the presence or absence of the quiescent letters in the accepted pronunciation; by their presence or absence in the consonantal spelling." Hirschfeld (*Halachische Exegese*, § 290, pp. 305, 306) takes אם (= "mother") to signify that form of the word which contains or involves the correct Halacha. Landau (ערן) Note s. v. אם [3] relates אם to אמות הספים (Isaiah vi. 4). H. Pollack, in *Kibוצת חכמים* (Vienna, 1861), renders אם "teaching of the sages," and explains thus:—"The teaching of the Sages requires us to interpret according to the accepted pronunciation—according to the writing of the Scribes." Mordecai Plungian (אור בוקר, pp. 1-6), deriving מְסוּרָה from מסר, to bind (see Ezekiel xx. 37), translates יש אם למסורה—"In explaining a word, we should be guided by its context (מסורה)," and יש אם למקרא—"We should expound the word itself, without reference to its context." Luzzatto (*l. c.*), consistently with his explanation of מְסוּרָה previously mentioned, understands לתורה כתיב to refer to *memoria technica*, and יש אם למסורה to mean, "There are well-established reasons for the signs that have been handed down to us in regard to full and defective spelling."

² See *Rosh Hashana*, 25 a, כתיב גי כתיב.

³ Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 298.

⁴ In its earlier recension. In the form in which it has come down to us it contains additions belonging to the fourth century.

⁵ Cf. *Nazir*, 23a, *Baba Mezia*, 87a, *Menachoth*, 87b, etc.

⁶ Psalm xxvii. 13, לולא. There are four such points in the Prophets (Massorah on Numbers iii. 39), none of which are referred to in the Talmud, making in all fifteen cases.

As it was not permitted to add marginal glosses to the Torah rolls, these diacritical marks were originally employed to "stigmatise" letters which it was thought ought to be elided, or which were omitted in some MSS.¹ This may be inferred from (a) the analogous significance of such points in Samaritan MSS., and (b) the fact that many of the words so pointed in the Hebrew Scriptures are actually wanting in the oldest translations (LXX., Samar., Syr.). R. José suggests a fanciful interpretation of the punctuated ה of רחקה. This would imply that the original significance of these points had been forgotten even in his time, so that they must have been introduced in a previous age. They appear to have been among the earliest of the written Massoretic signs. Their origin must certainly have been lost in obscurity when the Rabbins framed the following rule for their exposition:—"When the punctuated letters exceed the unpunctuated, interpret the former; when the punctuated are outnumbered by the unpunctuated, interpret the latter."²

One of the most eminent of Akiba's pupils, R. Meir, may likewise be ranked among the earliest Massoretic students. We often read of a codex written by R. Meir, who followed the profession of a Scribe.³ This codex is variously referred to as תורו של ר' מאיר, תלים של ר' מאיר, ספרא דר' מאיר. We are also informed of certain marginal glosses and variations from the *textus receptus* which it contained. Thus, at Gen. i. 21 there was appended the note וזהנה מוב מיר.⁴ Gen. iii. 21 read כרתות עור instead of כרתות אור.⁵ At Gen. xlv. 23 it furnished the more correct reading ובני דן חשים for וכן דן חשים. At Isaiah xxi. 11 it had the marginal gloss רומי (רומה).⁷ In his

¹ Hüpeden (*Neue wahrsch. Muthmassung v. d. wahren Ursache u. Bedeutung d. ausserordentlichen Punkte*). Cf. Ewald, *Lehrbuch*, 19, § d, 8th ed.; Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 257, and Schorr in החלוקין (Lemberg, 1856), pp. 99 and 100. *Aboth de R. Nathan* (Schechter, xxxiv., N^o) and the Midrash (*Bamidb. Rab.* iii., § 13, etc.), practically recognise the critical value of these points in the following apparently Hagadic explanation:—למה נקוד? אלה כך אמר עזרא אם יבוא אליהו ויאמר למה כתבת אותן (י) אומר לו כבר נקדתי עליהן. ואם יאמר יפה כתבת כבר אמחוק נקודותיהם מעליהן. Others regard the points as equivalent to our modern italics.—See Moise Schwab's Monograph, *Des Points Voyelles dans les Langues Sémitiques*, p. 26.

² *Ber. Rab.*, xlviii., § 17.

³ *Erubin*, 13 a; *Sota*, 20 a; *Gittin*, 67 a.

⁴ *Ber. Rab.*, ix., § 9; Maimonides, *More Nebuchim*, iii., ch. 10.

⁵ *Ber. Rab.*, xx., § 29. Onkelos appears to have had the same reading, for he translates לבושין דיקר.

⁶ *Id.*, xlv., § 8.

⁷ *Jer. Taanith*, i., § 1.

recension of the Psalms, הללויה was written, in opposition to the opinion of some of the Rabbins, as one word.¹

Of considerable antiquity² also must have been that method of (critical) emendation denominated *Keri* and *Chetib*—the substitution in public worship (and subsequently in the form of marginal scholia) of readings other than those found in the text. These *Keris* must have had various origins. Some of them, no doubt, originated from variants in the ancient MSS.³ Others arose, from the necessity of replacing (*a*) erroneous, (*b*) difficult, (*c*) irregular or provincial, (*d*) archaic, (*e*) unseemly or cacophonous expressions by (*a*) correct (*b*) simpler, (*c*) regular, (*d*) current, (*e*) appropriate or euphonious readings.⁴ A third class may have been designed to call attention to some mystic meaning or homiletical lesson supposed to be embodied in the text.⁵

While it is impossible to assign a date for the introduction of *Keri* and *Chetib*, it is evident that the contrast implied by these terms could not have arisen until after the text had assumed a settled form. Before that time the *Keris* would have been embodied in the text itself, as was done with the *Tikuné Soferim*. On the other hand, as Frankel⁶ has shown, many of these variations must have been known to the authors of the LXX., who usually exhibit a preference for the *Keri*.

The simplest cases, and therefore perhaps the earliest, were the variant spellings of לֹא and לוֹ. The Mishna (*Sotah*, v., § 5) records an instance (Job xiii. 15) in which considerable doubt is felt in regard to the correct form of this word—an ambi-

¹ *Jer. Succah*, iii., § 12.—See on the subject of R. Meir's variations the important article of A. Epstein in the *Monatsschrift*, 1885, p. 337 sq. Another important gloss of R. Meir, on Gen. xlv. 8, is given in an ancient recension of *Ber. Rab.*, quoted by Epstein (p. 342):—בספרו של ר' מאיר כתוב וישני: לאב שנאמר אשר ישה ברעהו.

² הלכה למשה מסיני *Nedarim*, 37 b.

³ Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, § 148; Cf. Kimchi, Introduction to *Commentary on Joshua*. Joseph Ibn Wakar (fourteenth century) likewise denominates them "variae lectiones" (נוסחאות).—Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature*, p. 270, note 15.

⁴ See Abravanel, Introduction to *Commentary on Jeremiah*; and on this subject generally Ginsburg's article "Keri and Kethiv," in Kitto's *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*.

⁵ This last explanation of the origin of *Keri* and *Chetib* may not infrequently be applied to other portions of the Massoretic system. As it was not permitted to commit the Oral Law to writing in early times, we may suppose that the Soferim (who, besides being the precursors of the Massorites, were likewise the Fathers of Tradition) employed the phenomena of *Keri* and *Chetib*, *Scriptio plena et defectiva*, etc., together with various calligraphic signs, as *memoria technica* of Halachic and Hagadic teachings (see Krochmal: *Moré Nebuché Hazeman*, ch. xiii.).

⁶ *Vorstudien*, p. 220 sq.

guity which is subsequently reflected in the Massoretic *Keri* and *Chetib* in this passage. Variations of לֹא and לוֹ are elsewhere (*Chullin*, 65 a, and *Erechin*, 32 a¹) explained by R. Eliezer, the son of the R. José whom we have already met with; whence it appears that the critical studies of R. José were carried forward by his son.²

Several of the *Keris* noted in the Talmud are of a euphemistic character, being based upon the Rabbinical principle (*Megillah*, 25 b), "All expressions in Scripture which are unseemly are to be altered in reading." The mode of pronouncing the name of the Deity may be considered as a special kind of euphemism, and is referred to at *Kidushin*, 71 a, and *Pesachim*, 50 a.

Although the majority of the *Keris* and *Chetibs* must have had a critical origin, the Talmud seldom or never concerns itself with this aspect of the subject. Its object being to develop the Hagada and Halacha, it often adopts both readings, which it seeks to combine in a Hagadic or Halachic interpretation. Thus it explains that וַאֲכַבֵּד (Hag. i. 8) is read וַאֲכַבְדָּה because of the five things which were to be found in the First Temple but were wanting in the Second (*Joma*, 21 b).³

A further trace of the labours of the early Massorites is to be found in the various references embodied in the Talmud and Midrash to those Scriptural passages in regard to which the Rabbins entertained doubts whether they should construe certain words with the preceding or subsequent clause.⁴

The Talmud has, moreover, much to say (*Shabbath*, 115 b) about the inverted ך which precedes and follows Numbers x.

¹ Here the two readings are merged, as they are in the Massoretic text at Gen. xxxi. 35.

² See Geiger, *Zur Geschichte der Massorah* (*Jüd. Zeitschr.*, iii. p. 80).

³ Cf. *Zebachim*, 37 b and 38 a, אֱהָנִי מִקְרָא וְאֱהָנִי מִסֹּדֶר. Very often the reason why both readings were adopted and a mystic explanation sought for the composite form was that the variant readings, having been found in different MSS., were assumed to be of co-ordinate inspired authority.—The variation of *Keri* and *Chetib* should be distinguished from the Talmudical formula אַל תִּקְרָא כֵן אֱלֹהִים כֵּן ("Read not so, but so"). This had no critical value whatever, and was never intended to be taken *au sérieux*. Yet it has occasionally misled copyists to make absurd alterations in the text. Some Kennicott MSS., e. g., read וַיִּשְׁתַּבְּחוּ in Eccl. viii. 10 because, forsooth, the Talmud (*Gittin*, 56 b) had playfully remarked אֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁתַּבְּחוּ אֱלֹהִים (Cf. *Minchath Shai*, *in loco*).

⁴ *Joma*, 52 a, b; *Shabbath*, 30 b; *Jerushalmi Aboda Zara*, ii., § 7; *Chagiga*, 6 b; Cf. *Ber. Rab.*, lxxx., § 5; *Shir Hashir. Rab.*, i., § 7; *Tanchuma* פִּי בִשְׁלָח, No. 26; Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 443; Graetz, in *Monatsschrift*, 1882, p. 388; *Minchath Shai* on Ex. xxiv. 5, and the *Massorah Magna* on Deut. xxxi. 16. Most of the above enumerate the following five passages: Gen. iv. 7 (שָׂתָה), xxxiv. 7 (כִּשְׁמֵעַ), Ex. xvii. 9 (מָחָר), xxiv. 34 (מִשְׁוֹקֵי) and Deut. xxxi. 16 (וָקֵם). The *Jerushalmi* (l. c.) adds Gen. xlix. 7 (אָרֹר); *Chagiga* (l. c.) refers to the doubtful construction of Ex. xxiv. 5.

35 and 36. The explanation of this phenomenon offered by the Rabbins—that these verses have fallen out of their original place¹—finds some confirmation in the LXX., which places them before the 34th verse. R. Jehuda Hanassi,² on the contrary, discovers in these signs a hint that the verses form a book by themselves, so that the Law would comprise seven instead of five books.³ Adopting Jehuda's view as the more likely one, we may regard these couple of verses as the remnants of a lost book which gave a detailed account of the battles waged by the Israelites during the forty years of their wanderings, and of the songs in which they celebrated their victories; to which book reference is made in Numbers xxi. 14, under the title of "The Book of the Wars of Jehovah."⁴ On the other hand, the former theory must be adopted for Psalm cvii. 23-31, which is also marked, according to the Massorah, with inverted Nuns;⁵ although the Talmud explains them, hagadistically, to have a qualifying significance.⁶

The pendent letters (הליוור) likewise come under the notice of the Talmud, and are homiletically interpreted. The suspended נ in מנשה (Judg. xviii. 30) is taken to imply (*Baba Bathra*, 109 b) that though Jonathan was the grandson of Moses, his idolatrous actions befitted a descendant of the wicked Manasseh.⁷ The ע of מרשעים (Job xxxviii. 13 and 15) is understood to teach that they who are poor below are likewise poor above (*Sanhedrin* 103 b).⁸

¹ Cf. *Sifri* בהעלותך פי No. 84, שלא היה, אב"ה. Hamburger (*Real-Encyclopädie*, ii. p. 1215, note 10) is clearly wrong in referring to the *puncta extraordinaria*.

² Geiger (*Jüd. Zeitschr.*, iii., p. 81), regards this as a mistake for José the Galilean.

³ So also *Soferim*, vi. 1; *Ber. Rab.*, lxiv., § 7; *Vayik Rab.*, xi. § 3; *Talkut Mishlé*, No. 9.

⁴ Hochstädter, in *Ben Chananja*, 1865, No. 39, p. 689; Joel Müller, *Mas. Soferim*, p. 85.

⁵ To show that verses 23-31 should be inserted between verses 32 and 33.

⁶ כאבין ורקין שבתורה (*Rosh Hashanah*, 17 b.).

⁷ Omitting its homiletic element, this view of the Talmud may be interpreted to mean that some ancient scribe, doubting whether the idolatrous Jonathan could possibly have been a grandson of Moses, inserted the נ conjecturally, as a "suspended letter." The Targum and LXX. read מנשה, Hieronymus reads מנשה.

⁸ The simplest account of the "pendent letters" is that they were inserted by way of correction, in the same way as we should insert an omitted letter nowadays. See W. Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, iii., p. 70.—The Massorah on Job xxxviii. 13, as also *Vayik. Rab.*, xiii., § 5, *Shir Hashir. Rab.*, iii. § 4, Midrash on Psalms lxxx. 14, *Talkut ib.*, and *Aboth de R. Nathan*, ch. xxxiv (נ"א) regard the ע in מיער as a suspended letter, as if the word were another reading for מיער "from the river." But this is an error. The ע of מיער was originally a majuscular letter, being the middle letter of the Psalms (*Kidushin*, 30 a)—Geiger, *Urschrift*, pp. 258-9.

the "received pronunciation" of words like שָׁמַיִם, אֶרֶץ and מִצְרַיִם which are to be read with *Kamez* in pause.¹ עִם signifies the removal in a number of cases (five only of which are mentioned) of a ו which had crept into the text, possibly through a vitiated, provincial pronunciation.² קִי' denotes words which are read though not found in the text, and כִּי' words which, although found in the text, are omitted in reading.³

Not less valuable and interesting is the information which *Kidushin*, 30 a, furnishes with respect to another branch of the labours of the early Massorites. The passage is to the following effect:—"Therefore were the ancient sages styled סופרים, because they numbered all the letters in the Law,⁴ and noted that the ו of גִּזְרֹן (Lev. xi. 42) was the middle letter of the Pentateuch. Further, they computed that דֶּרֶשׁ דֶּרֶשׁ (Ib. x. 16) were the middle words; that Lev. xiii. 33 (וְהַתְגַּלַּח, etc.) was the middle verse,⁵ that the ע in מִיעַר (Psalms lxxx. 14) was the middle letter of the Psalms, and Psalm lxxviii. 38 the middle verse. By "middle" in this connection is not to be understood the middle of an odd, but of an even series of letters and verses. Accordingly, the Talmud asks whether the ו of גִּזְרֹן belongs to the former or latter half of the letters of the Pentateuch. To this question the Rabbins of that age are unable to return an answer, because they are not as well versed as their predecessors were in the subject of full and defective spelling (אינהו בקיאי בחסירות ויתרות אנן לא בקיין).

¹ Geiger (*Urschrift*, p. 251) explains that אֶרֶץ is changed into אָרֶץ after an article, and that the other two words have a dual form without a dual significance.

² Rashi and Tosephoth understand עִם to mean a stylistic improvement in the use of אֶחָד. Müller (*op. cit.*, p. 8, note) thinks the expression may denote small circular marks placed above words.—Under the head of סִטְעִין (mistakes) or סְבִירִין (conjectures) the Massorah has elided a ו in several additional cases, the letter being retained in the ancient translations: the LXX., the Samaritan Pentateuch, and even the Jerusalem Targum. See *Minchath Shai* on Gen. xxxi. 36, etc.; Geiger, *Urschrift*, pp. 251-253; and for other authorities on the subject, Strack, *Prolegomena Critica in Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum*, p. 86.

³ The above passage is remarkable for containing lists of the principal alterations of the Scribes. These lists may be regarded as a kind of rudimentary *Massorah finalis* (Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 8, note 5).

⁴ Cf. *Sanhedrin*, 106 b; *Chagiga*, 15 b; איה סופר כל אותיות שבתורה.

⁵ According to *Soferim*, ix., § 3, Lev. viii. 15 is the middle verse, while the Massorah (without assigning any calligraphic distinction to it) marks Lev. viii. 8 as the half of the Pentateuch (עליו וישם את תורה וישם עליו חצי פסוקים של תורה וישם עליו את). These different results apparently correspond to three separate systems of computation—the Babylonian the Palestinian, and the Karaite (assuming the Karaites to have been the authors of the written Massorah). The Babylonian school, as represented in the Babylonian Talmud, computed the Scriptures to contain about 26,000 verses; the Palestinian school (*Soferim* and the *Midrash*), 23,199; and the Karaites, 23,203.—Graetz, in *Monats-schrift*, March, 1885; Cf. Rapoport, in *Polak's קרם*, pp. 10 and 11.

And not being as expert as the early Soferim in the matter of versualisation, they are equally unable to say whether Lev. xiii. 33 belongs to the former or latter half of the Pentateuch. The Talmud then makes mention of the interesting fact (which is also to be found in the passage from *Nedarim* just commented upon) that a certain verse in Exodus (xix. 9) was divided by the Palestinians into three verses.¹ It is likely enough that this division was connected with the Palestinian custom of extending the reading of the Law over three years. Next follows a valuable item of information. The number of verses in the Pentateuch is computed, on the earlier authority of some *Beraitha* (תנו רבנן), to be 5,888;² that in Psalms eight less, and that in Chronicles eight more.

The importance of this passage will justify the length at which it has been quoted. Principally it is of interest for the clear evidence it furnishes that a numerical Massorah had been developed by the Rabbins, even as early as the second century.³ This branch of the Massoretic studies would of course receive increased attention as time progressed. We are not without evidence on this point; evidence which goes to show that a large number of statistics had been compiled during the age of the Talmud, or somewhat later, which formed the basis of

¹ A converse instance of verse-division is furnished by *Vayik Rab.*, xiii., § 5, which regards Lev. xi. 5-7 as *one* verse—משה נתן שלשתו בפסוק אחד. In some parts of the Pentateuch a double mode of verse-division obtained, one adapted to the sense, and the length of a period; the other for use in public reading, in which the Chaldaic paraphrase followed each verse (See Geiger, *Jüd. Zeitschr.*, p. 24, etc.).

² Our ספראון enumerate 5,845 verses (cf. *Jüd. Zeitschr.*, iv., p. 265), and the *Talkut* on עקב (No. 855) has 15,844 verses. This may, perhaps, be explained in connection with the triple division of Exodus xix. 9, and the Palestinian triennial cycle, of which this division is an indication (see Graetz, in *Monatschrift*, March, 1885, and for a different view, Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 185). For the literature connected with the subject of versualisation in the Talmud, etc., and Massorah, see Strack, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

³ The Jews are not the only nation of antiquity who have possessed a numerical Massorah of their sacred writings. Speaking of the Rig Veda hymns, Prof. Max Müller says: "As early as about 600 B.C. we find that in the theological schools of India, every verse, every word, every syllable of the Veda had been carefully counted. The number of verses, as computed in treatises of that date, varies from 10,402 to 10,622; that of the words is 153,826; that of the syllables, 432,000" (*Selected Essays*, vol. ii., p. 119). The Samaritans likewise counted the verses, etc., of the Law, reckoning Lev. vii. 15 as the middle verse, and they calculated the number of *Kazzin*, or paragraphs into which each book was divided. At a considerably later period, the Arabs (probably in imitation of the Jews) compiled a numerical Massorah of the Koran, which they computed contained 323,015 letters and 77,639 words, and they reckoned how many times each letter of the alphabet was to be found in the Koran (Sale's *Koran*, Preliminary Discourse III.: Ewald, *Abhandlungen zur orientalischen u. bib. Literatur*, I., p. 57). Similarly the Persians, Chinese, and Greeks (see Strack, in *Theologische Studien u. Kritiken*, 1878, p. 358, and *Prolegomena*, p. 12, note 29). The Syrian Massorah will be referred to later on.

later Massoretic computations. *Shabbath*, 49 *b*, calculates that the word מלאכה occurs in the Pentateuch 39 times; *Shabbath*, 115 *b*, that there are 85 letters in Numb. x. 35 and 36; *Jebamoth*, 86 *b*, that the expression הַכְּהִינִים הַלֵּוִיִּם is used 24¹ times, and *Berachoth*, 9 *b*, that 103 Psalms precede the Hallelujah compositions. The *Pesikta* of Rab Cahana, 34 *b* and 35 *a* (ed. Buber), and various other Midrashim, compute the number of verses in Proverbs. The *Sifri*, ch. 342, states that 10² men were called אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים. The *Mechilta*, ch. 15, and Pirké de R. Eliezer, ch. 32, mention that three persons (and some say four) were named by God Himself.³ *Echah Rab.* on אָף, enumerates ten קְרִנֹת. *Aboth de R. Nathan* (ch. xxxiv., Ed. Schechter נ"א) calculates how many times הָיָא is written in the Torah with a י. Ten tongues are called תַּפְלָה (*Sifri*, ch. xxvi.); עֲשָׂה לָךְ occurs four times (*Ber. Rab.*, xxxi. § 8); there are ten instances of *a fortiori* reasoning in Scripture; and numerous similar calculations.

The passage which is engaging our attention is further important for its reference to the subject of full and defective spelling (מלא וחסר), which, as we have seen, commenced to attract the notice of the Rabbins about the end of the first century C.E. In the Jerusalem Talmud we frequently meet with the expression ספרא and its plural ספריא. The ספרא was an authority on this subject, besides being a public reader of the Law and a schoolmaster.⁴ One Rab Huna is called ספרא דסדרא, and is appealed to on the question whether a certain word זרועיה, in Isaiah lxi. 11, shall be spelt *plene* or *defective*.⁵ *Succah*, 38 *b*, assigns the following rank to the

¹ This is incorrect. The Massorah correctly reckons הַכְּהִינִים הַלֵּוִיִּם thirteen times, and וְהַכְּהִינִים הַלֵּוִיִּם thrice.

² The Massorah gives eleven.

³ The Massorah enumerates four as having been named before they were born.

⁴ See *Jer. Megillah*, iv., § 5.

⁵ *Jer. Kilaim*, iii., § 1. Cf. *Shabbath*, ix. § 2, אֲשֶׁתֵּאֵילָת לֶרֶב הוּנָא ספרא—the only passages in the two Talmuds where מְבֹנָא is used in the meaning of *plenum*, instead of יָתֵר (Frankel in *הירושלמי*, pp. 118 *b*, 119 *a*, and *Monatsschrift*, 1866, p. 276). Frankel is of opinion that the סופרים referred to in *Kidushin* are identical with the ספריא in the Jerusalem Talmud; that the abrupt commencement of the passage with ראשונים points to the first part having been lost; that the expression אינה is a mistake, for the early Soferim did not make calculations; that these סופרים or ספריא are referred to as *contemporaries* (אינה בקיאי not אינה הו) and that they flourished between the second and fifth centuries. Frankel adds that the ספרא is to be distinguished from the קרא (*Jer. Kilaim*, ix. § 7, *Bab. Kidushin*, 49 *a*, etc. Cf. the *בעלי מקרא* *Baba Mezia*, 33 *b*). The latter applied himself to the study of Scripture, but did not combine with it the profession of a Massorite. (See, however, on this point D. Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 38 *b*, and cf. Frankel in *הירושלמי*, *loc. cit.*, with Frankel in *Monatsschrift*, *loc. cit.*)

ספריא: they come immediately after the חכמים or Rabbins, after them follow the רישי עמא or Wardens, and finally come the דרשיא or Preachers. With reference to the painstaking accuracy with which they transcribed codices, they are spoken of in *Menachoth*, 29 *b*, as ספרי דווקני דבי רב ("exact copyists"), and the proverb became current הנה הוספאה ("The *Safra* is minutely accurate in regard to writing words defectively, but the *Halachist* is less careful" (D. Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

Of the תקוני סופרים (unseemly expressions amended in the text) there is no mention in the Talmud, but they are frequently cited in the Midrashim.¹ Of their great antiquity, seeing that they were alterations inserted in the body of the text, and not in the usual manner, by way of *Keri* and *Chetib*, there can be no question.

Such are some of the most important references² in the Mishna and Talmud to the labours of the Scribes in connection with the sacred text, and they are numerous and varied enough to justify the assertion that the basis, at least, of the Massoretic system had been laid between the second and sixth centuries.

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[To be continued.]

¹ See *Mechilta* בשלח, ch. 6; *Sifri* בהעלותך, פי, No. 84; *Ber. Rab.*, xlix. 12; *Shemoth Rab.*, xiii. 2, xxx. 12, and xli. 4; *Vayik. Rab.*, xi. 5; *Tanchuma* on Ex. xv. 6, where the institution is ascribed (apparently by some glossist—see Azariah de Rossi בינה, ch. xix.) to the men of the Great Synagogue. The enumerations in some of these Midrashim differ from that of the Massorah (Numbers xii. 12 and Psalm cvi. 20) which mentions eighteen instances, styling them in the former passage עזרא תקין עזרא.—Some authorities hold that ת"ס does not signify a Rabbinical amendment of the text; but an *a priori* periphrasis of the author himself, after the manner of Soferim or Stylists, and this they take to be the force of כינה הכתוב in the *Mechilta*, etc. So too Aaron ben Asher, in his דקדוקי הטעמים (p. 44, ed. Baer and Strack), and Shelomo ben Adereth, in פירושי אנדות לרשב"א p. 32 sq. (*R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adereth*, von Dr. J. Perles). Nöldeke (*Gött. Gel. Anz.*, 1869, p. 2001 sq., quoted by W. R. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 400) thinks that the tradition of ת"ס merely embodies, in no very accurate form, the recollection that the ancient recensions sometimes varied from the later official text (see Pinsker in *Kerem Chemed*, ix., p. 52 sq.; Reifmann in *Beth Talmud*, 1882; Frankel, *Vorstudien*, p. 173, note a; Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 308 sq.; Hamburger, *op. cit.*, p. 1218; Berliner, *Magazin*, 1876, p. 109; and for an extensive list of authorities, Strack, *op. cit.*, p. 87).

² It will be noted that the majority of these particulars were subsequently embodied by the Massorites in the *Massorah parva*, from which it may be inferred that the *Massorah parva* was an earlier work than the *Massorah magna*, and not an abridgment of it, as some writers (e.g. Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, Art. Old Testament, p. 602 *b*) consider.